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SUBMISSION OF THE AUSTRALIAN CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL TO THE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO THE AUSTRALIAN CRIME COMMISSION AMENDMENT (CRIMINOLOGY RESEARCH) BILL

Submission that the legislation should mandate the continued research and related services presently undertaken by the AIC

The Australian Crime Prevention Council (ACPC) brings to the Committee's attention the national and international importance of retaining the functions of the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) following its merger into the Australian Crime Commission (ACC).

The AIC has been an effective and efficient entity whose services provide significant financial and other benefits not only within Australia, but also throughout the Asia Pacific region.

ACPC's respectful submission is that it is vital that the legislation implementing the merger requires and mandates the continued provision of these services.

Why the ACPC is making this submission

The ACPC is the peak body representing crime prevention practitioners and organizations in Australia. Its membership includes the judiciary, criminologists, and consultants to Government and it works with representatives of industries involved in crime prevention such as insurance and security and those who rehabilitate offenders by offering them employment.

For over 50 years, it has been and continues to be a strong and effective advocate for crime prevention and community safety. It has collective knowledge of and expertise in these areas.

ACPC regards it as vital that the legislation under consideration should mandate the continued provision of research services, statistical data and other related services presently undertaken by AIC for the following reasons.

The importance of criminological research to the Commonwealth and the Australian States and territories

Crime in Australia currently costs about \$60 billion a year and in order to achieve value for money it is essential that expenditure on law and order by the Commonwealth, the States and territories be based on properly researched evidence. For over 40 years this has been provided by the AIC to the great benefit of these governments and to Australians as a whole.

The AIC's research and its impact on practice, legislation and policy has been of immense value in setting budgets and forming policy in the law and order field. It has been quoted in many academic and practitioner publications and is of great assistance to others working in the area. It has been a

well respected and highly regarded professional source of criminological data which has the same value as does medical research in the formulation of the health budget.

It is important to note that AIC has focussed on the proactive prevention of all crime, not just organized crime and terrorism. It has analysed, for example, the otherwise little studied domains of corrections and rehabilitation – significant areas of public policy in both Australia and the region. ACPC submits that its research work concerning national deaths in custody, national homicide monitoring, drug use monitoring and national firearms trafficking must be kept up to date and continue to be available to researchers and the relevant agencies. Likewise the JV Barry Library should be retained intact, kept up to date, and remain available to Federal and state agencies and interested members of the public as a valuable research tool.

ACPC submits that AIC's role in convening conferences and producing publications on all topics should continue.

Issues such as domestic violence, alcohol abuse, vehicle theft, vandalism and the rehabilitation of offenders affect millions of ordinary Australians.

Criminological research is a valuable tool in maintaining Australia's strategic role in the Asia Pacific region, and its being shared creates goodwill

The work of the AIC has been recognised worldwide for many years, including by the United Nations. It has proved to be an effective bridge builder with other countries to organise and muster resources in the fight against crime.

This has paid a very important dividend in demonstrating Australia's leadership within the region, and has been an important component in developing the high level of respect in which our criminal justice system is held.

It has greatly contributed to regional goodwill and has generated a platform for Australia to be a significant influence on the reduction of overseas criminal activity which could otherwise infiltrate our borders from elsewhere in the region.

ACPC is in a strong position to confirm these observations as we have ourselves established a strong network within the Asia Pacific region involving Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, India, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Fiji Islands, PNG, Hong Kong SAR and Macau SAR.

Representatives from these jurisdictions have visited Australia at two international conferences organised by us (both also involving AIC) in the last decade and on other occasions and we have undertaken multiple visits to the region cementing these links and attending overseas conferences. We share information on crime prevention and community safety through a newsletter and on our website to which they regularly contribute.

It is clear from information provided by our international colleagues that the AIC has been highly respected and valued in the Asia Pacific region in particular as a source of sound research information and advice.

In 2012 HRH Princess Mahidol of Thailand, the Chairperson of the 21st Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, instigated a meeting with us in Canberra and told us of the high regard in which the AIC was held in Thailand.

We have also discussed the value of AIC research with the Crime Prevention Councils of Singapore, Malaysian and Indonesia. In this regard we have strong connections with the leaders of these

organizations, who have introduced us to the Deputy Prime Minister and Police Commissioner of Singapore and to the Chief Justice of Malaysia, amongst others.

We have established strong links with Indonesia, recently meeting Mr Mardjono Rejksodiputro, Secretary of the National Law Commission, a member of the Indonesian Crime Prevention Foundation, and a former Dean of Law at the University of Indonesia, to discuss crime prevention information sharing between our respective organizations. We believe these ties in particular to be of great importance, having observed the recent media report (ABC PM) that there is a need for “more ballast” in the relationship between Australia and Indonesia and particularly links involving private organisations in our respective countries.

We also have ties with Sri Lanka which has recently established its own Institute of Criminology and the AIC has provided materials which have been of great assistance to it in that endeavour.

The AIC is highly respected in all of these jurisdictions and the diminution of its research, publications, overseas assistance and conference organizing functions would have an adverse effect on Australia’s criminal justice influence and role in the region.

Conclusion

We respectfully urge the Committee to have regard to these matters in its consideration of the legislation, and to take such steps as are appropriate to safeguard for the future the contribution made by AIC to Australians and those in the region.

Master Peter Norman OAM
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ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

The Council is a voluntary non-government incorporated association established in Adelaide in 1960, involving a wide cross section of interests and disciplines. Its objectives include the promotion of the prevention of crime and the provision of a forum for the discussion of issues and methods used to prevent crime and facilitate community safety.

It has for many years convened conferences and seminars at both local and Australia-wide levels. In recent years it has established close links with many jurisdictions in the Asia Pacific region. It has facilitated forums at a regional (Asia Pacific) level in Townsville and Adelaide. It is a member of the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) has also established links with several member countries of the European Crime Prevention Network (ECPN) Details of the Council's activities are on its website <http://www.acpc.org.au/>

It publishes a Newsletter with contributions from Australia and the region.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

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Vice President and Chairman - Master Peter Norman, OAM -District Court, Adelaide
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Mr Ray Carroll- Director, National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council, Victoria
Ms Isabelle Bartkowiak -Theron- University of Tasmania, teaches Tasmania Police
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